



Interview Summary: Lisa Ducharme and Nathalie Vinette, Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Lisa Ducharme and Nathalie Vinette were interviewed by Gordon Cameron, Shantona Chaudhury, Yves Côté, and Allison McMahon on October 11, 2022. Questions about this interview summary should be directed to Allison McMahon.

Background

Lisa Ducharme is the Acting Director General of Federal Policing National Intelligence (“**FPNI**”) for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (“**RCMP**”). During the Freedom Convoy, she was the Director of Strategic Intelligence, FPNI. Her responsibilities included overseeing the Ideologically Motivated Criminal Intelligence Team (“**IMCIT**”).

Nathalie Vinette is the Divisional Intelligence Officer, National Division. In that role, she oversees the Protective Intelligence Unit (“**PIU**”). The mandate of the PIU is to provide timely intelligence for protective operations and to conduct investigations into direct and indirect threats to protected persons.

Not all documents referred to in the footnotes were discussed with the panel during the interview. Some are referred to for illustrative purposes and to assist the reader.

Ideologically Motivated Criminal Intelligence Team

Ms. Ducharme explained that IMCIT’s mandate is to look at ideological grievances within the public order space that may pose a threat to public safety or officer safety. Such grievances may arise from a diverse array of actors, including ethno-nationalists, anarchists, anti-LGBTQ activists, and environmentalists. Ms. Ducharme stated that IMCIT will start to monitor a situation where there is a detected threat to the moral fabric of society as it may lead to more serious activities posing a threat to safety or acts of criminality. IMCIT relies on definitions within the *Criminal Code* and section 2(c) of the *CSIS Act* to guide their activities in regards to what constitutes criminality/threats. Where there is an element of criminality, the intelligence research will become more focused.

Ms. Ducharme explained that IMCIT’s function is to notify applicable authorities on detected ideological threats that may impact public safety or officer safety, as well as produce related strategic intelligence and to interpret information. For example, during the Convoy, IMCIT provided guidance about the meaning and context of symbols carried by some protesters (e.g., the insignia of the Diabolon Movement, the Three Percenters, and Proforma).

When IMCIT becomes aware that a threat or criminal event may occur, it will immediately advise the police of jurisdiction and Federal Policing National Security (“**FPNS**”). This is the case regardless of whether IMCIT considers that the criminal event constitutes a



threat to the national security of Canada, as defined by s. 2(c) of the *Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act*.

National Threat Landscape Strategic Assessments

Ms. Ducharme stated that one of the intelligence products IMCIT produces is the National Threat Landscape Strategic Assessment, which is a monthly intelligence summary of public order issues across the country that may have national-level implications. When preparing a National Threat Landscape Strategic Assessment, IMCIT surveys each RCMP divisional intelligence section about events with an ideological nexus that have occurred within that province. Based on assessment results to date, the nature of the ideological activity varies across the country. For example, reports from British Columbia will often concern environmentalists, while in Ontario, ethno-nationalist threats are more common.

Special Threat Advisories

IMCIT also produces Special Threat Advisories (“**STA**”). This is a separate intelligence product that IMCIT will issue when there is an event or issue that requires immediate briefing. Where the event is ongoing, IMCIT will issue periodic updates. For example, a number of STAs were issued throughout the General Election in 2021.

Ms. Ducharme explained that when IMCIT prepares an STA, it relies on a variety of sources, including National Division situational reports, Project Hendon reports [discussed below], and open source information. Unlike situational reports, STAs take raw information and processes it to provide context, relevance and assessments. They are forward-looking documents that identify what to expect down the road. STAs are not issued every day because they require analysis of emerging trends.

Ms. Ducharme stated that the first STA concerning the Convoy, issued on January 25, 2022, was triggered by the dramatic increase in the amount raised via GoFundMe,¹ and the fact that convoys were materializing from multiple points across the country. At that point, the protesters’ intention to come to Ottawa was clear.

Distribution of Special Threat Advisories

Ms. Ducharme explained that STAs are distributed widely within the RCMP, including to leadership, Criminal Operations Officers, Divisional Intelligence Officers, and members of the Divisional Criminal Analysis Section, among others. They are also shared with external intelligence partners, including the Integrated Terrorism Assessment Centre (“**ITAC**”), and with government departments, including the Privy Council Office (“**PCO**”).

¹ PB.NSC.CAN.00000520_REL.0001. This document was not referred to during the interview.



Ms. Ducharme noted that during the Convoy, a number of new government departments were added to the distribution list, including the Government Operations Centre, the Department of National Defence (“**DND**”), and the Canadian Armed Forces. As well, the number of individuals receiving the STAs within each department increased. Ms. Ducharme indicated that when a new address was added to the distribution list, IMCIT would send copies of all back issues so that the recipient was up to date.

Ms. Ducharme stated that the Ottawa Police Service (“**OPS**”) and Ontario Provincial Police (“**OPP**”) were not on the federal distribution list for STAs, but the products were deliberately written in such a way (based on the sources used) so they could be shared broadly with all law enforcement partners and this was communicated in their distribution emails. RCMP divisions will often share STAs with other police forces in their area, and so either National Division or O Division might have shared the STAs with the OPS or OPP. Ms. Ducharme also noted that STAs are written for a strategic audience to support strategic decision making. As a result, they may have been less helpful to a local police force like the OPS, whose duties require minute-by-minute information about the situation on the ground, which would be found in tactical, operational intelligence and situational reports.

Assessment of the Freedom Convoy

Ms. Ducharme stated that IMCIT reported that the protesters would stay in Ottawa for a long period based on social media posts, including information about people bringing in jerry cans of gas and tents. She explained that the IMCIT’s primary concern was not the duration of the protest, but rather whether the protest created threats to public safety or public order as per its mandate. IMCIT identified risks to public safety, which included the potential for conflict between protesters and counter-protestors; protesters carrying around cans of gas; the blockade of Wellington St.; and the incitement of hatred.

According to Ms. Ducharme, IMCIT raised awareness about anything it identified as a potential risk to public order or public safety during the Freedom Convoy. This included, among others:

- The presence of heavy machinery;
- The potential weaponization of trucks;
- The amount of money raised via GoFundMe; and
- The presence of hate symbols.

During the Convoy, IMCIT received questions from federal officials seeking information about certain of the organizations involved in the Convoy (e.g., the Three Percenters, Pro Forma, and Diagonal). In response to those inquiries, IMCIT provided a threat assessment about what sorts of groups were intermingling on the ground. Ms. Ducharme clarified that IMCIT’s STA assessments were not focused on individuals; rather, they considered environments, atmospherics, or ideological movements.



When asked about the relationship between the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol and the Freedom Convoy, Ms. Ducharme stated that they were both situated on the continuum of anti-government rhetoric, which had become increasingly violent. As well, certain actors took advantage of both events to earn a profit. However, IMCIT assessed that the two events were motivated by different ideologies.

Ms. Ducharme clarified that IMCIT does not conduct threat risk assessments (like the Integrated Terrorism Assessment Centre (“ITAC”)); rather, it reports the trends it identifies to others, who can assess the risks posed by those trends. During the Convoy, IMCIT aimed to provide a balanced accounting of what it knew about the situation at that point, and an assessment of how serious it was.

Project Hendon

Ms. Vinette explained that Project Hendon is a working group established by the OPP to facilitate information-sharing between police agencies. It was first convened in 2020 to address the Wet’suwet’en protest [opposing the development of the Coastal GasLink pipeline in British Columbia]. The participants include the RCMP, provincial police, and local police. The OPP uses information submitted to Project Hendon to prepare intelligence reports (“**Hendon Reports**”).

Ms. Ducharme relayed that, according to its stated mandate, the purpose of Project Hendon is “to provide situational awareness of threats with potential provincial implications for public order and public safety”. Ms. Ducharme noted that in addition to their reports, Project Hendon participants share intelligence via email and during daily teleconferences or Microsoft Teams meetings.

Ms. Vinette and Ms. Ducharme explained that Hendon Reports were one source of information that they used in their work. According to Ms. Vinette, the PIU would review Hendon Reports and extract information about threats against protectees [persons covered by the RCMP’s protection mandate] for use in PIU intelligence briefs, while respecting caveats and sourcing information properly. However, she clarified that this was only one of many sources of information.

Similarly, Ms. Ducharme said that IMCIT would use Hendon Reports as a source of factual information when preparing STAs. She explained that IMCIT would conduct its own collection and assessments of that information, applying its specialized expertise. Ms. Ducharme stated that IMCIT did not brief up single sources of information like Project Hendon. Rather, it would prepare briefings based on a gamut of sources.

Combined Intelligence Group

Ms. Vinette stated that she led the development of the Combined Intelligence Group (“**CIG**”). She received the direction to create the CIG on January 26, sent invitations to partner agencies to join the CIG on January 27, and began hourly briefings on January 27 or 28.



The CIG was located in the National Capital Region Command Centre (“**NCRCC**”). The representatives of partner agencies sat together in a boardroom and shared information as they received it from their respective agencies. Ms. Vinette stated that the CIG partners included the PIU, Tactical Intelligence Unit, and other units from RCMP such as Tactical Internet Operational Support (TIOS), Federal Policing Threat Assessment Section (FPTAS), Federal Policing National Security Operational Analysis, Divisional Criminal Analysis Unit (DCAU), as well as the OPS, OPP, Service de Police de la Ville de Gatineau, Sécurité publique MRC des Collines-de-l’Outaouais, DND, Canadian Security Intelligence Service (“**CSIS**”), Canada Border Services Agency (“**CBSA**”) and PPS.

Ms. Vinette stated that she worked together with OPS Sergeant Chris Kiez, Constable George Bouris, and Constable Stephane Quesnel in the NCRCC on a daily basis. She said that her OPS partners were concerned about safety risks to the community. However, she was not sure whether they were concerned about the risk that the Convoy would become an occupation.

INTERSECT

Ms. Vinette explained that INTERSECT is an intelligence-sharing body made up of law enforcement and first responders. Because it has a broader audience [including, for example, first responders] than other intelligence-sharing groups, only information of a relatively low level of security classification can be shared.

The Third Party Rule

Ms. Ducharme explained that information received from an intelligence agency cannot be shared with anyone other than the receiving agency without the originating agency’s permission. This is known as the “third party rule”. Ms. Ducharme stated that the rule is necessary to maintain trust within the intelligence community.

Ms. Ducharme explained that before IMCIT would circulate any intelligence product inside or outside of the RCMP, it would send the product to FPNS for review to confirm that the information disclosed would not impact any ongoing investigations.

Policy Recommendations

Commission Counsel asked what lessons could be learned from the experience during the Convoy.

Ms. Vinette stated that in retrospect, she believes that the CIG should have been created earlier, given that there were early indicators of the potential size and scale of the Convoy (particularly in the amount of funds raised via GoFundMe). She also suggested that, before implementing the Gold-Silver-Bronze command structure, it would have been useful to run table-top exercises to map out the role of each intelligence agency so as to minimize overlap in their work. She stated that there should be a pre-existing plan for



bringing together the various members of the intelligence community in the event of a crisis situation.

Ms. Ducharme said that the Convoy highlighted the challenge of coordination in the production and dissemination of intelligence at the federal level. She described it as an “information overload”, with many different departments creating their own intelligence products based on the same pool of information. Ms. Ducharme said that this made it challenging to manage information flows. She suggested that there should be a central body that coordinates the flow of information and consolidates the available intelligence products before briefing senior levels of government.